



## ***Recommendations:***

**21-23 JUNE**

**2011**

# ***Role of Ulema in Promotion of Peace and Harmony in Society***

Organized by  
**Pak Institute For Peace Studies (PIPS)**  
Islamabad Hotel, Islamabad



## Recommendations:

### Group-1

Topic: *Role of Ulema in promotion of sectarian harmony in society*

- Instead of focusing on points of sectarian differences, religious scholars should highlight and propagate those areas of jurisprudence and respective interpretations of *Quran and Sunnah* for which all the religious sects are in agreement.
- All schools of thought should take practical measures to stop the ill-educated and contentious ‘clerics’ from leading prayers and delivering sermons in mosques.
- Sectarianism should be eliminated, particularly these steps need utmost attention:
  - (i) Speeches and writings that hurt the sentiments of others should be prohibited.
  - (ii) All religious scholars ought to stop their followers from raising exciting slogans in the name of *fatwas*, or *religious decrees*.
  - (iii) People should be informed about the intrigues of local and international conspirators with regard to fomenting differences among Muslims.
- Mutual respect and tolerance should be promoted while having difference of opinions.
- A book, based on the beliefs of various schools of thoughts, should be compiled where the belief of each sect should be described by the prominent religious scholars of the concerned sect.
- To eliminate sectarianism, *Quran and Sunnah* should be made focal points.
- The use of loudspeaker should be controlled and a code of ethics should be chalked out in that regard.
- A national-level forum should be formed which should comprise prominent religious scholars and *Muftis* (expounders and interpreters of Islamic law). Only this forum should have authority to issue a *fatwa*.
- Special activities/events should be promoted which bring together scholars from all religious sects, or schools of thoughts. Tradition of participating in each other’s festivities and mourning should be encouraged.
- Distribution or attribution of certain religious festivals to distinct sects should be put to an end and the religious scholars belonging to every sect should participate in these special occasions including *Moharram* and *Rabiul Awal*.
- The process of promoting sectarian harmony, and mutual interaction and dialogue should be initiated from the level of madrasa students.
- Names of madrassas, or religious seminaries, academic institutes and mosques should be general, acceptable for all sects, and should not give impression of sectarian differences and distinctions.
- There are only a small number of people within each sect who provoke sectarianism. They should be identified and held accountable for their acts.

- The literature and published material that is insulting and provocative, and contains fatwas aimed at refuting others or declaring them heretic should be confiscated.
- The religious scholars should give priority to preaching of religion instead of propagation of their respective sects.
- It should be made mandatory for media to stop airing and printing programs and material, which may promote sectarianism.
- All sects should prioritize issues of national security and law and order.
- The harms, threats and devastations emanated by sectarianism should be indicated through speeches and in written shape.

## Group-II

Topic: Role of Ulema in countering extremism in society

This group opined that the religious scholars need to perform their role in these three spheres in order to make a society violence-free:

### **1. State Affairs**

- To ascertain the role of the religious scholars in politics in Pakistan, their role in the history of the sub-continent should be revisited.
- The religious scholars should be introduced to the idea of modern state and its institutions.
- Peaceful means should be adopted to reform the affairs of the state.
- The gap between the religious scholars and other segments of society should be bridged.

### **2. Social Affairs**

- Islam's spiritual teachings and its related institutions should be revived and reformed to reform the society.
- The role of *mimbr-o-mehrab* should be made more vibrant and effective for social reformation.

### **3. Religious Affairs**

- Only those religious scholars should be contacted for explanation and interpretation of religious matters who have authority and credibility.
- Self-accountability should be promoted among the religious scholars, religious institutions and organizations.
- All madrasa boards should introduce a justified introduction of other religious sects in their curricula to promote sectarian harmony.

- The interaction between the top-level religious scholars belonging to various sects should be extended to grassroots level.
- Fundamental jurisprudential, ethical and social principles should be taken into account while issuing a religious edict, or *fatwa*.
- The cooperation and interaction between the religious seminaries and international religious universities should be enhanced.
- To have an opinion pertaining to issues of apostasy and expulsion (from religion), a forum should be established comprising the prominent scholars of all the sects.

### Group-III

Topic: *Suggestions to counter political and socio-cultural factors of extremism in society*

#### **Political Factors**

- The democratic system is in turmoil because of intolerance in politics, inability of the politicians and lack of leadership. In this perspective, ruling class needs to be change its behavior that could lead the country towards social and economic justice.
- The system of governance in Pakistan should be according to the *Quran* and *Sunnah*.
- The rulers should not be the puppets of external forces and must priorities the national interest.
- The political system of Pakistan is based on deception, treachery and hypocrisy. Until the political system and democracy are reformed and prudent leadership emerges, political unrest would continue in the country.
- An active and pragmatic role of religious scholars is imperative to put the political system on right track.

#### **Social Factors**

- The rulers and the feudal elite are responsible for the illiteracy, ignorance and lack of education among the people. There is a dire need to establish quality education institutions at public level.
- Different systems of education generate different thinking patterns and cause imbalance in society. A balanced educational system capable of producing similar thought process could contribute to peace.
- The ruling elite must regard seriously, recommendations of the religious scholars for promotion of peace and harmony.
- Inequality, class distinction, vanity, character assassination of religious scholars, the patronage of crimes by the rulers, lack of unity, prejudices, ethnic strife and opposition for the sake of opposition should be discouraged.

- The role of judiciary, executive and media should be positive.
- Lack of moral excellence and righteousness, absence of process of self purgation, eroded sense of responsibility, high-ranking personal interests, deterioration of Islamic family system, lack of cooperation to fight against oppression, lack of forgiveness and tolerance are reflection of an imbalanced social behaviors; these behaviors should be taken out from the society.

### Economic Factors

- Feudal system is cancer of society and a solution based on *Sahriah* needs to be adopted.
- Economic inequality and unjust distribution of wealth which is resulting in growing divide between the haves and have-nots must be closed.
- Due to lethargy and laziness, the income generation through hard work gets reduced. The profit and income generating sources without hard work should be discouraged.
- There is a disregard for Islamic principles of distribution of wealth (Sadqa, or charity, and Zakat). Islam has clearly described the categories where Zakat and Sadqa etc can be spent, it should be strictly followed.
- Interest-based capital system must be stopped.
- Electricity production, strengthening of industry, agricultural production as well as better organization of technical facilities and best use of the resources of the country could bring economic stability.
- The dependency upon foreign aid and loans should be minimized and resources should be generated from within the country.

### Group-IV

Topic: How to promote a culture of peace and harmony in society?

- Training and education of individuals has fundamental role to create tolerant culture in a society. It should start from home and children should be prepared to resist negativity whenever they come across it.
- Educational curricula, media, religious sermons as well as training workshops are some of the key tools which can be used to help individuals grow as balanced persons with strong character.
- Education curricula including those of madrassas should not have biased and discriminatory introduction or reference to any sect or community.
- It should be considered as accepted norm that every sect has the right to have belief according to their best understanding as well as to highlight and promote it in a positive manner. Moreover, the interpretation of the beliefs of every sect should be considered as authentic which is being described by the follower of that sect.

- The issues (religious, intellectual, political or social) that carry difference of opinions, should be discussed in a knowledgeable manner. Among scholars, such debates should be academic and at public level, goodwill for others should be reflected from the critic.
- The writings of acclaimed figures belonging to various schools of thought which discuss tolerance, forgiveness, and the mannerism while having difference of opinion, should be made available to maximum number of people.
- To defuse the impacts of nonacademic and mediocre expressions on the controversial issues, the writings of sober and top rated writers on these issues should be promoted.
- There is ambiguity about various questions at academic, intellectual and jurisprudence level and due to this ambiguity, intolerant behaviors are able to find a space. For instance, what are the principles and regulations and conditions for apostasy? What is the limit, manners and scope of discouraging bad deeds (nahi anil munkar) in society? Who has the right and authority of Jihad? etc. The ambiguity on these issues could not be redressed without making them topic of sober academic debates and discussions.
- Tolerance and intolerance should be covered as a general social behavior instead of seeing the issue only in the context of religious elements. Moreover, the intolerant behaviors in different religions, communities, segments as well as intellectual and political groups should be discussed at equal level.
- To eliminate intolerance and extremism, the causes (political, social and economic imbalances, oppression and injustice, undue and aggressive religious behaviors) should also be addressed.
- The examples from history and the life of the Holy Prophet should be presented where social relations were maintained despite of differences. Likewise, the events where people of knowledge gave respect to other people of knowledge should be highlighted. The diversity, patience and tolerance that we observe on the occasions of *Hajj* and *Umra*, should also need to be focused.
- The efforts that have been made for the promotion of tolerant culture by other Muslim or non-Muslim countries should be introduced to people through media. By blending local situation with these experiences, people should be provided with proper guidance.
- The dialogue between diverse segments of society (Muslims, non-Muslims, religious, non-religious etc) should be made a constant practice. By doing this, efforts should be made to invite the elements that are having extremist tendencies instead of just ignoring them.
- The trend should be promoted where efforts could be made to settle the controversies among the people belonging to other segment of society and bridge the gap between them instead of leaving it on their own to settle.
- The interaction between the important personalities belonging to diverse opinions should be made public so that people may have a positive message and extremist tendencies could be reduced.
- The responsible persons belonging to various schools of thoughts should mention the services, ideas or their personal interaction with other school of thought(s) in their writings,

statements and sermons. Such forums should be established where people from every sect and segment of society could discuss the collective issues.

- Every school of thought should establish an internal mechanism of self-accountability and should remain vigilant about the internal extremist tendencies. Moreover, extremists' tendencies should not get even slightest of the support.
- PIPS and other similar institutes should act as bridge between various segments by promoting dialogue between them and should provide analytical and informative material regarding social issues and make it accessible to trend setter people among all the segment of society.

### Group-V

Topic: What should be the balanced role of madrassas in promoting balanced views in society?

- Religious scholars and *madaris* alone cannot be termed responsible for decay of society. The role of other elements should also come under discussion.
- Students and audience should have the courage to take criticism.
- Every segment of society should express their disassociation with mischievous elements among them who try to create differences.
- The libraries of *madaris* should contain books of all schools of thought.
- Interpretation of a sect should be made only by the representative of that sect.
- The books which carry positive debates on differences of opinion should be given more attention in the *madaris*.
- The basic introduction to and awareness about the modern knowledge should be imparted to madrasa students.
- The government should take measures to adjust the economic benefits available to the people of madaris and religious scholars in accordance with society.
- In order to nurture the intellectual discourse among the religious scholars, measures should be taken to keep them updated and aware of the current affairs.
- The madrasa teachers and staff should be provided with high level training, and steps should be taken to enhance their capacity.
- The commonalities between various sects should be highlighted and sectarian differences should be limited to only academic level. Moreover, they should be expressed in a manner that controversies should not spread further.
- On the occasion of various special religious days, joint congregations should be held at madaris and mosques.

- By endorsing educational certificates of madaris equal to other educational certificates, discrimination should be eliminated so that the graduates from madaris could be able to serve the governmental and private organizations.
- The policy “don’t criticize others’ sect and don’t leave your own” should be spread and promoted.

